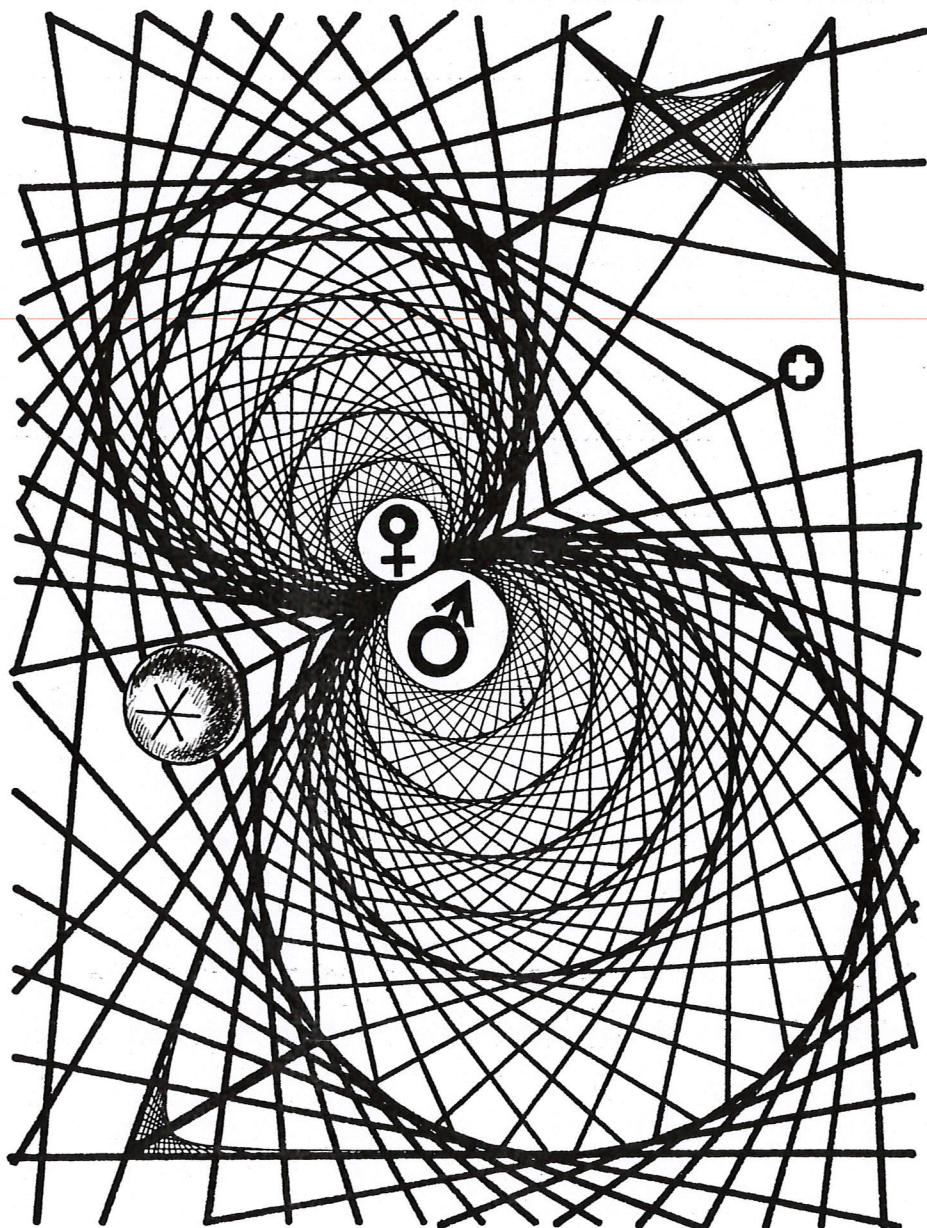


1965

Patterns '65



"Procreation"

M. Toller '64

Port Huron Junior College

Port Huron, Michigan

7th Ed



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Preface

This issue of **Patterns** magazine presents the results of the seventh annual Creative Writing Contest. The Contest is open to all students of Port Huron Junior College including students enrolled in night courses for college credit. All entries must be original.

The categories for the Contest are short story, poetry, personal essay, critical essay, and ink drawings. The three awards are as follows: First Prize, First Honorable Mention, and Second Honorable Mention. These awards are for each category. In addition to award-winning entries, other carefully selected entries are published in **Patterns** magazine. Occasionally, when entries do not meet the standards of the judges, certain awards are omitted.

The judges of the Contest this year are Richard J. Colwell, Peter A. Obuchowski, and Blanche I. Redman. They are all faculty members of the Department of English.

Of the eighty-two manuscripts submitted for entry, there were twenty-four personal essays, six critical essays, six short stories, and forty-six poems. Fifty ink drawings were entered in the art division.

A word of explanation for the critical essays should be added. They were class assignments from the class text and required no documentation.

It has been the aim to distribute **Patterns** immediately before Easter recess. Usually the supply has been exhausted within the hour. Beginning with this issue, however, there will be more copies available. The participants and all the other students of Port Huron Junior College are to be commended for their continued interest in the Contest and **Patterns**.

Blanche Redman, Director

Sponsors:

Richard J. Colwell
Grace L. Donaldson
Eleanor B. Mathews
Peter A. Obuchowski
Blanche Redman

Art Judges:

Earl Robinette, Art Department
Blanche Redman

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Short Story



"The Iron Curtain"

C. Turner '68

The Boy and the Man

by

Valleda Huston

The screen door slammed; an eddy of dust blew along the kitchen floor before an irate figure in faded shirt and pants.

"What's the matter, son?" queried the woman at the cook stove, busy with preparing the hearty breakfast of Texas ranchers. "This is early in the day to be so wrought up."

"That Sam hid my hoe and Pa jawed me out for not gittin' my garden done 'fore breakfast. Anyway, I beat him chorin'. I'll git even with him!" Then, in a wheedling tone, "Ma, kin I go for the mail this mornin'?"

"Go, wash your hands for breakfast," said the mother. "We'll ask Pa when he comes in." She sighed as Jim went out, banging the door again. He was the youngest of five, red-haired and fiery-tempered to match, but a willing and careful worker.

The two girls came sleepily downstairs and began to set out the oatmeal dishes and fill the glasses with milk. Pa and the other two brothers were coming up the path from the barn.

There was the sound of splashing water and scuffling boys; then Pa entered, followed in single file by the boys — Jim first, then Sam, and Jack the eldest.

There was the quiet sound of serving and eating for a time. Up at daylight and three hours' work before breakfast make for concentration for a while. There was a busy day ahead — acres of cotton to be hoed. Pa didn't believe the new-fangled cultivators could do a good job, so boys and girls alike joined the battle against the weeds.

After breakfast, Jim whispered, "Ma, ask Pa if I can go for the mail."

"John, could you spare Jim for a while to ride over to the crossroads to see if my package of cloth has come? It should be at the post office this week. I'd like to get started with my sewing before canning and harvest time come along."

"Yes, guess we can manage this morning. But, Jim, you come right home and don't stop to fool with those Andrews kids. And don't ride Old Jed too hard — it's going to be hot today."

"Don't worry, Pa. I'm more apt to get hot than he is. That old donkey don't know how to hurry."

Jim went out to the barn to catch the donkey and put a blanket on his back, and get a sack to put the mail in. Ma said she wanted some spices and thread, too, as long as he was going.

As Jim rode off, he thought with pleasure of the ride ahead. He'd rather ride any day than hoe cotton. That got awful tiresome! Weedin' the garden wasn't so bad, there were the feathery carrots, the heavy green tops of the beets and tender plants of peas and beans. You had to hoe careful not to break the runners on the cucumber and squash

plants. He thought about Sam hiding his hoe and how he could get even with him. Made him mad just to think about it. Now he'd have to hoe the garden tonight after supper 'stead of playing ball.

As he looked down the road, he saw a tall figure on horseback coming toward him along the dusty path. Jim thought, "Now, who could that be at this time of mornin' out ridin'? Didn't look like any of the neighbor folks. Bet it's Slim Harden from over by Aspermont! Now what's he doin' over here? Wish that bridge was nearer — maybe we could of hid there 'fore he saw us. Guess I gotta just ride past as though I didn't know who he was." Old Jed jumped and quickened his pace as two heels bit into his ribs.

As the two riders approached each other, Jim's heart beat fast and he felt smothered. As they drew near, the other rider spoke, "Mornin', boy," and rode on.

"Yup, it was Slim Harden, all right!" Jim said to himself. He had heard Pa and the neighbors talking about him the other day and the big horse with the fancy saddle that he rode. The boy's knees were still shaking. He wondered where Slim was goin' and if he'd meet him again on the way home.

But nothing more happened.

Jim picked up the mail. Ma's package was there — she'd be glad to see that — and the things she'd ordered were safely in the bag with the mail. Now to get home in time for dinner.

Jim arrived home just as Pa and the others came in from the field. After they were at the table and Pa had said grace, Jim said casually, "Met Slim Harden this mornin' ridin' this way. Did he pass here, Ma? Must have been cuttin' cross country to home."

"Jim, what did he look like?"

"Jim, is he as handsome as they say?"

"Boy, bet you were scared!" This from Sam.

"Well, what'd he say to you?" asked Jack.

"He looked just like you said, Pa," answered Jim. "That sure is a great horse. And that saddle — boy! Shines in the sun 'nough to put your eyes out! Yeah, he spoke. Said 'Mornin'.'"

"That's what happens to a man when he gets mad at some one and tries to get even," Pa said. "Slim used to be a decent fellow. Then he went to Nevada and got in with a bunch of gamblers. That's a good way to get into trouble! He claimed some man cheated him one night, got fightin' mad and beat the other fellow to the draw and killed him. One thing led to another when the other man's buddies ganged up on him and there was two more men dead before he got out of there. He out-run the Sheriff and worked his way up into Canada. Must have been ten years or more he's been gone. Come home one night week, ten days ago and hasn't been seen since. Wonder what he was doing over this way today? Don't think he means harm to anyone, but must be a mighty scary feeling to know the law might be on your trail. Well, come on, children. Let's get back to hoeing. Jim, you come along. That hoe you couldn't find is laying under the cotton where you must of dropped it last night."

Somehow, hoein' cotton wasn't such a hard job that afternoon. Pa sure made them work hard and he got mighty put out sometimes, but

he'd never lose his temper 'nough to kill a man. 'Course, he wouldn't be caught dead gamblin', anyway. That Sam! Jim knew he hadn't left his hoe in the cotton last night. But Sam was always playin' tricks—not mean ones, though. Jim hoed faster as he thought, "Maybe if I git part of the garden done tonight, Pa'll let me play ball awhile if I git up real early and finish it 'fore time to do chores."

The Old Man and the Rock

by

John E. Wright

The old man cast. When his line had gone slack he sat down, coughed, and spat on a mossy rock.

The youth inspected his baitless hook. He then glanced enviously at the shining mess of carp next to the old man.

"I can't make the bait stay on my hook," he said pointedly.

"That's life," said the old man.

The boy finished baiting his hook and cast again. The line screeched out from the rusty reel.

"Watch where you're casting!" shouted the man crossly.

The awkward youth reeled in, avoiding the elder's line by walking behind him, holding his pole high in the air.

"I don't think much of this fishing-hole. I know a better place."

"Humpf!" replied the old man spitting again on the mossy rock at his feet. "They's plenty of fish here."

"You know, the important thing about fishing isn't just catching fish," said the boy efficiently snuggling his lithe form against the trunk of a large willow. "The important part is being out here fishing."

"Now, who'd ever say a thing like that?"

"Well, one of my teachers said something like it once."

"Humpf!"

Suddenly the old man's pole arched, his line sang out and sliced through the water. After a brief battle he held before the boy's admiring eyes the finest catch of the day, a golden six-pound carp.

"That's life," said the old man. He packed his tackle, strung his fish, spat on the rock once more, and left.

Soon the boy stood up and walked slowly toward the old man's fishing spot. He cast, a beautiful, sure cast; then sat down. He spat upon the mossy rock.

Poetry



Impact

by

John E. Wright

Have e're you watched a human life go out?
Perceived the glow get dim retreating in,
Leaving lifeless ash around itself?
While firekeepers fan the glow, one knows,
Somehow, no doubt, the life is going out.
When, with a curl of smoke, the glow is gone;
The life is gone and hope is gone somewhere;
The thought of ashes cold and brittle chill
And fill one's throat with hurt, 'till someone says:
"I knew this good man . . . Was he your friend too?"

It's Raining Out Tonight

by

John E. Wright

It's raining out tonight.
So what?
Perhaps, at this moment, it's raining in Japanese
alleyways, softly, delicately.
Maybe now, a slight drizzle is dappling the dusty
backs of Indian elephants.
I'll bet that somewhere over the open expanse
of the Pacific a thunderstorm is bashing
itself against the sea,
unwitnessed by human eyes.
And yet, my neighbor, behind his venetian blinds,
glances into the yard between us
and has the egoism to mutter merely,
"It's raining out tonight."

On Anthropology

by

John E. Wright

It seems to me to be
A matter of degree
With apes and bees
And birds and fleas
And man (of course) the oddity.
Man thinks, man writes,
His poetry recites.
But he's aligned
With those who find
Their life the common commodity.

His philosophy was freedom
 From whence he had come,
 He gave but little of himself
 As one, we never became.
 I called to him silently
 And searched the darker depths,
 But never could he give of me
 The whole, mortal being.

His fear of mortality became his code
 No one could communicate,
 And I, least of all, was able
 To reach the unknown man.
 Generation of anxiety, so they say
 Yet what more can we do,
 We try to employ stoicism
 And end with automation.

It isn't the fault of our generation
 The rules they imposed for us.
 So if we do not live up to them
 We're puzzled, and worse, insane.
 Oh, why can't I tell you before too late
 How deeply I really feel,
 Must I resort to pen and ink
 To tell you I am merely human?

He Is Gone

by

Barbara Johnson

He is gone; and with him all that wondrous love
 That used to lend sweet spring a soul of joy,
 Of earthy smell, of youth, and quickened blood.
 That love envisaged summer a bright toy
 Of sunburned hands, of silver surf, and sugar sand.
 In fall, when nature's fullness weights the heart
 With melancholy thoughts, that love sustained, and,
 Painless, changed the course from sun to snow without a chart.
 And when the snow had come to smother things,
 That love throbbed on in winter's wake, a warm,
 Secure, unfailing pulse, that only love brings
 To the young, who blindly see no end, no harm.
 But he is gone; and all that's left to me
 Are seasons past — to make an aching task of living these.

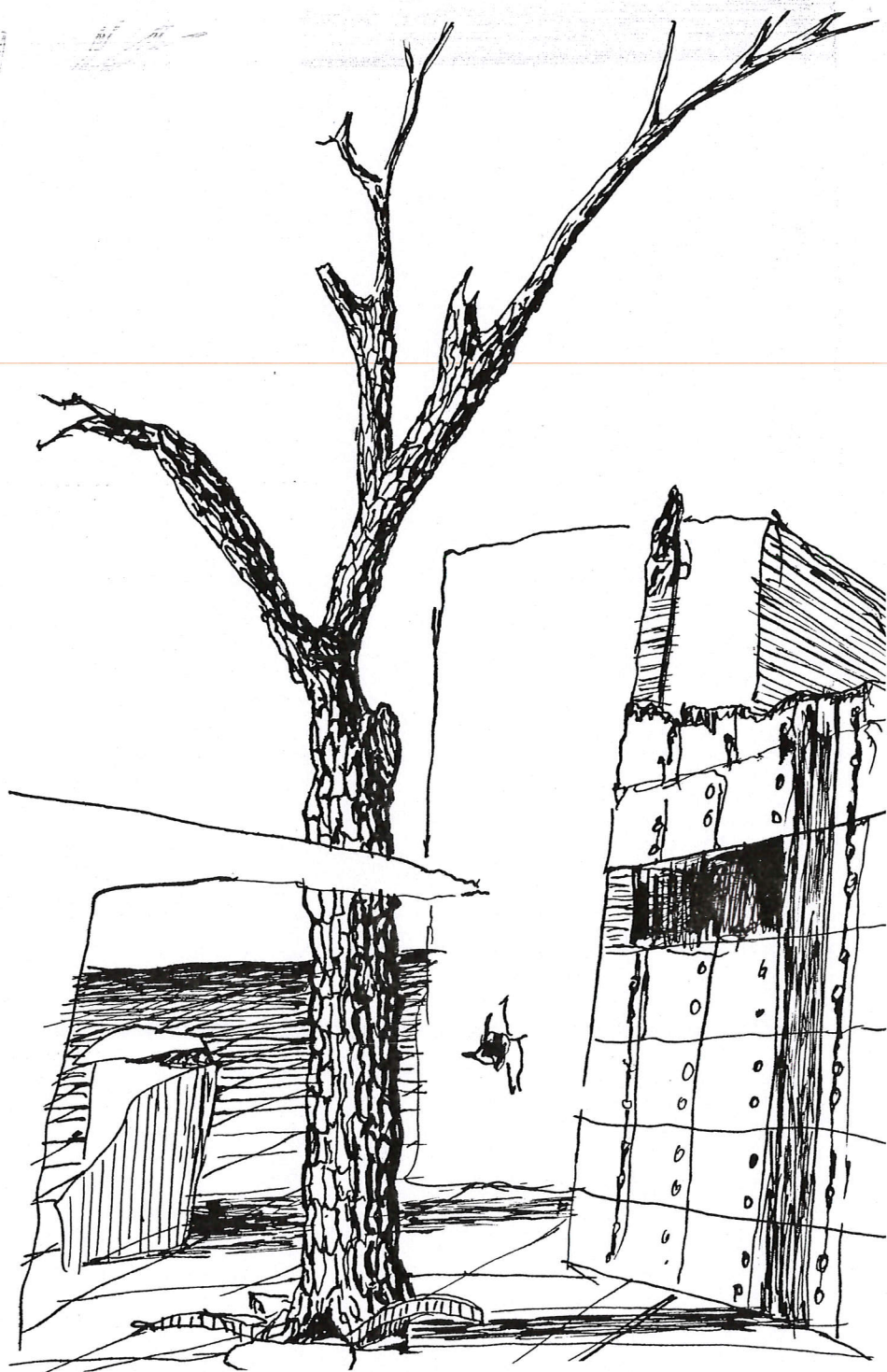
Pianist
by
Angela Andino

Meek, mild man
Tall and sparse
or
Short and thick
Fingers long
That move with grace
or
With revenge
Sculptured hands
To white keys make
Such
Perfect love
Pure, white love
As in this world
Is
Seldom found.
It could be
That this one waits
while
Others walk
'Til his turn
But when it comes
he
Triumphs then!
"Piano play.
Be my escape.
Oh
Be my voice!"
Now it's through
The music's done
but
Hear it still
See that man
No, not a man
but
So much more.

Strips of Cloth
by
John E. Wright

Hang forlorn, washed of color, tattered.
Have you seen the strips of cloth fluttering
in the winter-bare branches?
Restless, out of place in the peaceful, immobile tree,
snagged and fluttering.
Have you, as the blue-black birds of winter have,
ignored them as they ceaselessly flutter there?
Watch them sometime as they flutter senselessly.

Critical Essay



The Blank Silence

by

Judy Postill

The truths Robert Frost seeks are innate in the heart of men and in common objects. He looks on common things and finds in them uncommon meanings: the desert places represent the loneliness found in the heart. Frost deals with the blank silence and stark loneliness of our modern society. He obviously recognizes this aspect of our supposedly advanced civilization and brings it to our attention, but he doesn't actually offer a solution for this emptiness. Frost desperately asks God, or the supreme being of our universe for an answer, yet he knows there will be no response, only the continued blank silence and eternal void of our lives.

Two of Frost's poems very explicitly portray this universal feeling of blankness and emptiness found in our society today. "Desert Places" in its sombre and quiet tone presents a detailed picture of what, at first glance, appears to be merely the deathlike scene of a wilderness:

Snow falling and night falling fast oh fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in the snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

But more closely observed, this image which Frost paints is discovered as being the desert places of the heart. There is no answer to man's problems and there will be no answer, only the continued silence and blankness of our modern lives. This tragedy and heartbreak are expressed in casual everyday diction. The loneliness and white blankness are ubiquitous and eternal with no hope of their ever lessening:

And lonely as it is that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less —
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.

There is nothing more frightening than the emptiness of the desert places found in the heart, not even in the empty spaces of the universe where no human beings exist: "I have it in me so much nearer home / To scare myself with my own desert places." In "Acquainted with the Night" we find this same searching for reassurance of a divine power and an answer to man's reason for living. God does not speak for modern man. There are no guidelines; man is entirely alone. The "night" in this poem represents more than the darkness which follows the day. It is the feeling of blankness and heartbreak of mankind. Man's time is not the time of the universe, which is symbolized by the empty stare of the clock face.

This poem very effectively expresses what Frost and other contemporary poets feel is man's loss of a sense of direction. One cannot depend on clocks or other mechanical devices for guidance: "One luminary clock against the sky / Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right." Where is man to turn for consolation and reassurance in the tumult of life when all he can find is the blank silence of a superficial world? "I have been acquainted with the night."

prehensible. He Frost's philosophy is profound, yet not incomprehensible. He reaches out to the human heart and human understanding with simple, direct, matter-of-fact language. He is never carried away with emotion, and reading his poetry creates a feeling of awareness which causes man to examine his soul. This is how the Frost method of conveying an idea functions. His down-to-earth attitudes and simple words which fit into conventional verse forms picture his world and thoughts with remarkable clarity.

Frost's words are homely words which might be used by two farmers meeting on a country road, yet each term is packed with meaning. The clever repetition of onomatopoeic sounds gives life to Frost's poetry: "Snow falling and night falling fast oh fast." Also in this same line we find the exclusion of punctuation in normally required places, which allows the feeling and words to flow along smoothly and uninterrupted.

Frost doesn't exercise complete empathy. Even though he frequently goes beyond the realm of mankind, he always returns to mortal human beings and earth, finding comfort in life and reality. He knows enough to draw a line between man and nature. Unlike tragic Narcissus, Frost knows better than to stop and ponder too long. It is permissible to pause and wonder, but not linger because the beauty may devour you and keep you in its grasp. Man might momentarily seek another world, but must return to himself for strength and not seek it in this universe.

The Soldiers Came

by

John E. Wright

There was a girl of Japan.
I knew her well,
That flower of the misty isle.
Her life was the sea and green mountains, fish and wood-fires,
Poetry and the samisen, and love,
Until the soldiers came.

She took their presents
And smiled.
She shed her kimono and wore dresses to please the soldiers;
And she was pleased with the dresses.
She sat and watched them drink their liquor laughing;
And she drank their liquor.
They laughed at her poor English;
And she learned their language.

She is gone now,
A bride perhaps.
The soldiers are gone from Japan,
And gone is the flower of that misty isle.

For the Time Being

A Christmas Oratorio — W. H. Auden

by

Rande Teichman

This narrative of A Christmas Oratorio, portraying the circumstances into which Jesus was born, is intended by Auden to be an ironic commentary on our own times. We may well ponder, that after more than 1900 Christmas celebrations, men are no different than they were under the Roman Empire. Auden presents us with this question, quoting Romans, Chapter VI: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The poet himself answers: "God forbid."

A. Advent.

I. The scene opens with the Chorus foreboding a dark and muddled vision of that which is to come: "Darkness and snow descend; / The clock on the Mantelpiece / Has nothing to recommend," / and continues with a rather familiar modern phrase: "Love is not what it used to be," / only to be answered by the indifferent Caesar: "Portly Caesar yawns — "I know" —." / The Semi-Chorus goes on to describe the general decay at the time, the void of direction and the heartlessness of men: "The prophet's lantern is out / Cold the heart and cold the stove / Ice condenses on the bone." / Despite man's resourcefulness, something terrible is taking place:

Ravens alight on the wall,
Our plans have all gone awry,
The rains will arrive too late,
Our resourceful general
Fell down dead as he drank.

II. The Narrator appears to state more directly what an upside-down world this is:

Under the subnormal temperatures prevailing, and if,
The two sexes are at present the weak and the strong,
That is not at all unusual for this time of year.

The occupation of space is the real and final fact, depicting our century in our own words. Further, he states: "the pattern composed / By the ten thousand and odd things that can possibly happen / Is permanent in a general average way." Man, however, finds an excuse for this crazy pattern: "We were always able to say: We are children of God / And our Father has never forsaken His people."

The Narrator turns on himself now, saying: "But then we were children: That was a moment ago," / we no longer have childlike faith, and we are forced to face a nightmarish reality because of it: "sitting alone / In the waiting room of the country junction, looking / Up at the toilet window." The reality hits us: "this Horror starting already to scratch its way in?" Man now is faced with a nameless fear, a silence, a terrible "Void": "for no nightmare / Of hostile objects could be as terrible as this Void." / Man knows how to deal effectively with the physical world, but is frightened of his own spiritual void.

B. The Annunciation.

I. In this section The Four Faculties, man's four senses, his intuition, feeling, sensation and thought, make the following comments: "We lure man either / To death or salvation;" / in other words, we hold the key to man's future. But we can only guide him; man must make the final decision: "But what it may mean he / Alone must decide."

II. The Four Faculties, crying out now in agony over their inability to guide man away from sin and evil, are interrupted by Intuition: "Look. There is someone in the garden," referring to Mary who represents the hope of the innocent.

III. The angel Gabriel appears before Mary, bringing the message that: "Love's will on earth may be, through you, / No longer a pretend but true" / she will, through her innocence, bring forth a son of God, through whom love shall prevail on earth.

C. The Temptation of St. Joseph.

I. A rather modern Joseph hurries to meet his love:

My shoes were shined, my pants were cleaned and pressed,
And I was hurrying to meet
My own true Love,

who was Mary, but he was hindered on the way: "A star had fallen down the street," by the news of the Immaculate Conception. Joseph enters a bar in an effort to console himself in the midst of taunting whispers of gossip and scandal:

Mary may be pure,
But, Joseph, are you sure?
How is one to tell?
Suppose, for instance . . . Well . . .

Joseph, distraught now, reproaches God: "Father, what have I done?" and begs for a modern miracle to help him out of the situation:

All I ask is one
Important and elegant proof
That what my Love had done
Was really at your will
And that your will is Love.

But Joseph receives no concrete answer, except: "No, you must believe; Be silent, and sit still," / which refers to Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God." /

III. The Semi-Chorus enters to plead with Joseph and Mary to pray for all those who have been misled by physical and sensual over-indulgence:

Blessed Woman
Excellent Man,
Redeem for the dull the
Average Way,
That common ungifted
Natures may
Believe that their normal
Vision can
Walk to perfection.

D. The Summons.

I. The Star of the Nativity, which points the way for the Wise Men, or believers, now speaks: "I am the star most dreaded by the wise, / I shall deprive them of their minor tasks / In free and legal households of sensation, / Of money, picnics, beer and sanitation," implying that the way to spiritual fulfillment cannot be achieved through physical pleasures; neither can it be reasoned by logic: "Beware. All those who follow me are led / Onto that Glassy Mountain where are no / Footholds for logic," / but it must be pursued through self-denial and is often a lonely and a difficult road to travel: "Those who pursue me take a twisting lane / To find themselves immediately alone / With savage water or unfeeling stone."

The Three Wise Men at this point assert the reasons that they are willing to follow the star: "To discover how to be truthful now / To discover how to be living now / To discover how to be loving now," / and in unison: "To discover how to be human now."

II. The Narrator speaks, asking all men and women to interrupt whatever they are doing: "That His voice may be heard in our Just Society / Who under the sunlight / Of His calm, possessing the good earth, do well," and grotesquely proclaims: "Pray Silence" / for whom? Not silence for God—, but, for Caesar, the self-righteous man in the flesh: "stand motionless and hear / His proclamation."

In the Recitative, the Proclamation of centralized power falls on every citizen to be counted (head-tax in Jerusalem for Rome).

The Narrator now comments: "With well-tuned instruments and gratified voices / We should praise Caesar." /.

III. The Fugal-Chorus answers: "Great is Caesar," / for he is responsible for all our modern technological advances; "Great is Caesar," / for he has created our great business empire; "Great is Caesar," for he is, in short, responsible for our worldly happiness and freedom.

IV. The Narrator confirms, in greater detail, our wonderful modern inventions: "These are stirring times for the editors of newspapers. / History is in the making. Mankind is on the march," / for which we must be grateful: "For Powers and Times are not gods but mortal gifts from God;" / so let us pray: "That the Kingdom of Heaven may come, not in our present / And not in our future, but in the Fullness of Time."

E. The Vision of the Shepherds.

I. The Three Shepherds appear, representing those who are dissatisfied with the world in its physical splendor and whose hearts are tuned to spiritual revelations: "What is real / About us all is that each of us is waiting. / For, though we cannot say why, we know that something / Will happen," and they hearken unto an angel and follow him to the scene where Jesus is born: "Let us run to learn / How to love and run, / Let us run to Love." /

F. At The Manger.

I. Mary sings a sad lullabye to the Babe that He should sleep and dream in His innocence, for surely the flesh is painful, and the path toward death is sure: "O shut your bright eyes that mine must endanger."

II. The Wise Men and The Shepherds sing praises of brotherly love: "Released by Love from isolating wrong, / Let us for Love unite our various song." /.

G. The Meditation of Simeon.

The thoughts of Simeon define the nature of man and resolve the various opposites in harmonious reality through the Child:

"By the event of this birth the true significance of all other events is defined . . . By Him is dispelled the darkness . . . Because in Him the Flesh is united to the Word . . . Because in Him the Word is united to the Flesh . . . And because of His visitation, we may no longer desire God as if He were lacking."

H. The Massacre of the Innocents.

I. Juxtaposed with the high seriousness of "The Meditation of Simeon", this interior monologue of Herod in which he looks for the easiest way out of a moral choice, to kill or not to kill Jesus, becomes a ludicrous "mock-heroic" satire on Herod, and modern self-righteousness, in terms of vague mythical and historical references, high-sounding abstractions and philosophical emptiness, side-by-side with petty details of our everyday lives.

II. and III. The rough-shod vulgarity of the soldiers: "When the Sex War ended with the slaughter of the Grandmothers, / They found a bachelor's baby suffocating under them," is juxtaposed with the contrasting loveliness of Rachel in her grief, weeping for her children: "Somewhere in these unending wastes of delirium is a lost child / Speaking of Long Ago in the language of wounds" to point out the cruel heartlessness of men without a God.

I. The Flight Into Egypt.

I. Joseph had been warned by an angel to take the young child and Mary and flee into Egypt, for Herod would destroy Jesus. The Holy Family now sets out on a perilous journey through the desert toward an "insecure security" in the land where their forefathers had preceded them in slavery. The Voices of the Desert whisper the tragic end: "Come to our eventful desert / Where everyone goes to pieces." These Voices may well be modern salespeople recommending their "well-run" desert.

II. Recitative.

This is a sad commentary on the Flight: "Fly Holy Family, from our immediate rage, / That our future may be freed from our past."

III. The Narrator announces the end of the Christmas program: "Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle the tree." In our modern hustle and bustle, this was just a chore in the regular routine of things: "And already the mind begins to be vaguely aware / Of an unpleasant whiff of apprehension at the thought / Of Lent and Good Friday," but, says the poet, that is quite another matter and continues: "But, for the

time being, here we all are / We look around for something, no matter
what, to inhibit / Our self-reflection;" and the Chorus resounds our
indifference:

He is the Way.

Follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness;

He is the Truth.

Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;

He is the Life.

Love Him in the World of the Flesh.

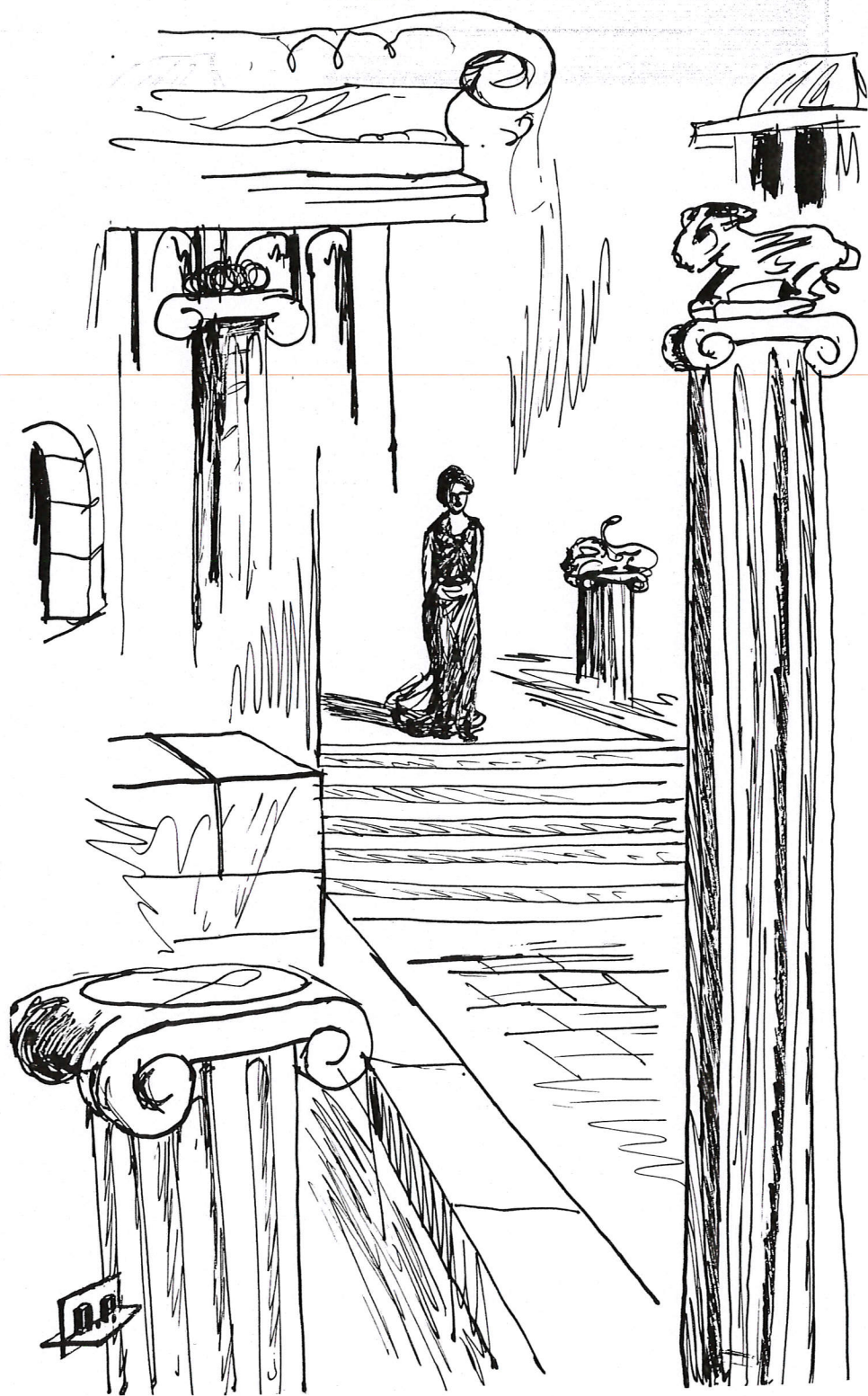
A Resumé

by

Gladys L. Dafoe

An assignment I have and as strange as it seems
It's like one of those horrible, nightmarish dreams.
A story to write, an author to be!
How could this assignment have happened to me?
I've thought and I've struggled, my mind just won't work.
How to think of a plot and then make it "perk",
That's all beyond me. So I'll just turn to rhyme,
And see where I'll land in the 'lloiment of time.
We've had poetry, plays, and short stories, too
We've studied them all; we'll name just a few.
Poets: Hopkins and Thomas and Karl Shapiro
To keep up the interest in Class One-o-two.
From poetry then, we went into plays
To write one I couldn't, though you numbered my days.
My actors won't act, my scenes fall apart
The curtain comes up; we're not ready to start!
But famous old Soph'cles with "Oedipus" great
Knew just how to tell of those governed by fate.
With this classical tragedy, we're well nigh in tears
'Tis not hard to believe, how it's weathered the years.
In "Arms and the Man," it was right-about-face.
With captains and soldiers, we had to keep pace.
A fight to be fought, and a war to be won
With dear Captain Bluntschli, it turned out to be fun!
A paper on drama and then one on verse
We've had a great time in this English course.
A term paper too, with subsections as slugs
With background and body, I almost went bugs.
Away to my kitchen, I'd go like a flash
To sweep up the floor or dish up the hash,
But the short story's not done, nor is there a play
To turn in to teacher and thus save the day.
A ballad? Well, hardly! 'Tis a story in rhyme
Of our English class, and a mighty good time.
And I'll miss all you folks after final exams
As I head back to work with my pots and my pans!

Personal Essay



The Iron Curtain

by

Joseph A. Vitovec

"... It is my duty, however, and I am sure you would not wish me not to state the facts as I see them to you, it is my duty to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe. From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent . . ."

So spoke Sir Winston Churchill at Fulton, Missouri, on the fifteenth day of March, nineteen hundred and forty-six. His memorable speech brought into sharp focus the difficulties which entwined the post-war Europe, which, after first being trampled upon and scarred by the hordes of Nazi invaders from the North and West, was now suffering from ideological prostitution from the East.

These events, that like an immense whirlpool swept Europe in the shortest span of time from the ever so fragile embrace of democracy into the tentacles of communism, did not occur by chance alone — the stage was set earlier, in February, 1945, at Yalta, on the Crimean peninsula, and later in Berlin, in June of the same year. It was here where the spheres of influence were agreed upon by the three victorious powers, where agreements were made with amateurish *naïveté*. Was the price of Russia's entry into the war with Japan worth all this eventual anguish and sorrow on the part of the millions of Europeans who so suddenly found themselves to be the pawns of a giant chess game, the tasty morsels of an eerie feast, where they would be put to satisfy the hunger of a glutton for a mere promise of crumbs?

There was one man who disagreed, but he no longer was in a position of influence: Sir Winston Churchill's Conservative Party had been defeated in the postwar parliamentary elections and he himself was forced to yield the Prime Ministry to Clement Attlee, who along with President Truman, attended the Berlin and Potsdam conferences. Churchill's warnings echoed hollowly across the world's expanses, unheeded, and largely ignored. After all, there was a new world to be built, peace to be enjoyed, wounds to be healed. The miniscule problems and tasks at hand merely pointed the way to the importance of immediacy, and thus the stage was set for a contemporary drama in which sooner or later most of mankind would either directly or indirectly participate — the battle for the human mind . . .

* * *

It often becomes necessary, so that we can gain the proper insight and view happenings in their true perspective, to commit them to past and to distance, to place enough time between them and us, the observers, to enable us to most effectively separate the pertinent facts from the transient fiction, the truth from the half-truth . . . and from the non-truth. Regretfully, however, from our vantage point, distant from it as we are in all the above mentioned respects and in spite of our rational selves, the Iron Curtain still remains something of a mystery, a rhetorical cliché and a label, behind which often lies the sum total of our ignorance.

When Mr. Churchill uttered his memorable words he wasn't describing a physical thing; he wasn't speaking in terms of the number of tons of iron used in the miles of barbed wire skirting the no-man's land, in the armor of tanks, barrels of the guns, bayonets, mines, hobnails, helmets, concrete-reinforcing rods in the bunkers, bullets, communications wires, or even the nails that put together the wooden monuments to the fate of the eastern man, the observation towers, that bastardly occupy a place of solace apart from and in contrast to the beauty of the sky-soaring pines of the Bavarian forests. What Mr. Churchill described was a kind of complacency and unpreparedness, a lack on the part of the overwhelming majority of the rational but ill-prepared men to cope with a sudden and well-planned thrust of a fanatical and irrational minority. What Sir Winston really described was a collapse of humanity in the face of real challenge.

From the very beginning the communists held the psychological advantage: they were provided with solid backing from Moscow, their cadre contained many who had spent the war not fighting with the legions, but being indoctrinated in the fine art of subversion of the democratic processes. It was they who secured the most advantageous positions of importance in the power vacuum that temporarily existed in the post-war confusion, and so when the smoke cleared, the explosions died, and the last jubilant cry of joy became a hoarse whisper — the curtain did not come down, but rose high up on the first act of the impending drama.

What ultimately precipitated the final collapse of rationality and reason was not the lack of democratic processes, for those who believed in them and were willing to carry them out were in an overwhelming majority, but the failure of this majority of individuals to band in a unified front and a common cause. To many, democracy was a *carte blanche* for dissent, any dissent, if only to prove that the freedoms it promised really existed, but not realizing that along with it came also the responsibility to protect it . . . or it would die. Oh yes, there, too, were voices, but their warnings were quickly drowned in the seas of dissent and complacency. When the end came, it was quick and easy.

The first and most important target of the communists was the *intelligentsia*, the educated but splintered and dissenting masses, that had to be disposed of before they could band together again in a common cause. The professional man was the chief enemy of the communists, for he represented an ideological opposition. The Moscow mind could easily enough cope with the less educated masses — these could be swayed, if not by argument and logic, however distorted, then at least by the butt of the gun and the point of the bayonet.

So the purges began, with mobs ransacking the country's institutions from stem to stern, focusing in particular on the institutions of higher learning, the teachers, the professors, and the students as well, unless, of course, they chose to conform. Few did; mostly, however, they flooded the streets of the ancient capitals in protests which inevitably ended in bloodshed . . . death for some, prison for many.

The streets that only a short time ago yielded their wealth of cobblestones to the builders of barricades now lay silent and empty, their

once again neatly arranged stones forming a bizarre pattern of a giant silver-grey checkerboard, an immense multitude of sacrificial stones upon which a supreme sacrifice to the folly of man has been performed and which, true to its historical tradition and physical substance, has refused to consume the sometimes bright and fresh, sometimes dark and drying liquid that had settled in its crevices. As the air deathly stilled, the voice of the great man, now, as in the past, echoed hollowly over the lands, its words carving a niche of posterity for the epitaph of the century: ". . . From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended . . ."

Descended . . .

Descended with a resounding thud . . . like the blade of a guillotine smashing down on a hapless victim, severing the very last of the fragile ties that bound the eastern man with humanity. Its fall, like the report of a shot of a revolution, was heard 'round the world, but unlike the famous echo, it inspired no men to action. For it seemed as though millions upon millions of individual iron curtains enveloped a like multitude of human consciences, concealing the troubled minds behind a **facade** of unseeing eyes and deaf ears. It was almost as though the iron curtain had transformed itself into a living thing, a giant octopus-like creature whose millions of tentacles reached deep into the human minds where they spewed out a nestfull of offspring, who further again enveloped the thought with mire and the mind with a stranglehold.

That, what at some point in time and space we decided to call the Iron Curtain, has existed for centuries, indeed, has existed since the beginning of man. The name really doesn't matter; it is merely a catchphrase which appeals to us because it tends to misplace the locale, it helps us conveniently to conceal our own individual shortcomings and appease our egotistic nature by pointing the accusing finger somewhere else. It tends to hide the fact that the guilt by silence is just as grave as the guilt by consent, and the guilt by indifference is no less damning than the guilt by design.

The real Iron Curtain stretches far and wide . . . across the minds of the burners of books and the burners of crosses, burners of churches and worshipers of prejudice and hate. It transgresses the wastelands of human minds and through them the physical expanses of our planet. It exists everywhere, yet, it becomes evident only when the thin, nebulous line, which separates man, the rational, from his irrational counterpart, is erased. By then, it is already too late.

The past has taught us little. We have had our "Wars to end Wars", we have had our "Splendid isolation" and countless other lesser periods of history to which we attached ringing labels of tinsel, but they, like the gilded statues of gods, contain but the commonest of worm-eaten wood underneath, and when the flimsy coat of tinsel is ripped off by the four winds, the remains lay exposed to everyone for what they are — a monument to man's folly of trying to deceive himself.

Perhaps this is because man has forever involved himself in the affairs of humanity in a negative sort of a way, acting only when other, and often more reasonable, courses of action lay in ruin of his own making, and no amount of eloquence can ever reverse the irrepressible truth that lies buried under the silvery heaps of words. For man is

himself positive
individually
individual
fallible and imperfect, and unless he involves himself positively in the affairs of men, unless he strives for perfection, individually, rather than as a group or a mob, unless he recognizes his individual responsibility rather than reliance on the collective responsibility of society in which his individual faltering can be lost, unless he clearly fixes in his mind the fact that a group, a society, a nation, is a mere multiplication of selves, of the "I's", of the solitary individuals and that it can be no better than its component parts, that unless he looks inward in search of the truth, there will be again, someday, somewhere, another Iron Curtain. For an Iron Curtain is a state of mind, which, through its multiplicity, becomes the mind of the family, the town, and the nation.

* * *

We have failed when we chose to travel the softer road of collective guilt, rather than the difficult but honorable — one of individual responsibility.

The somber voice of the great man spoke to us, the accusing finger pointed at us, for we are the real builders of the Iron Curtain.

Commitment
by
Sandy Shaw

They that speak of Life, forfeit Living.

I prefer to be one with the many, the rabble that philosophers deride,
And seek joy with senses honed for Life,
And feel the sentient throb of every joint, bone, sinew of mortal dust.

Mock the men — peering at Life from their pollen-free, air-conditioned universe.

Mock the men — groping in attempts to make a science of this Art.
Mock the academicians — outlived by a lush clutching a dusk-brown bottle;
For he lives Life, they study it.

How apt that a sarcastic God
Sees fit to let those poor and pitiful creatures
Create their own punishment;

A neon-lit, temperature-controlled, dehumidified, deodorized Hell.

Insane Asylum
by
John E. Wright

The king posed a question; he questioned his court,
"Is this bust not a likeness, a likeness of me,
This gift of a good friend from neighboring fort?"
And his eyes scanned the room, scanned the room patiently.

Said the prince, "Oh no, sire! 'tis only a stone,
The head of your grace be of finely shaped bone."

A lady-in-waiting sarcastically said,
"The melon's too small, not the size of **your** head."

Soon a jackal-faced jestor with bursting bravado
Sallied up to the throne,
Gave a critical moan,
And crushed the old man's avocado.

Watching the Gate

by

Lois Oswald

Looking out the kitchen window on a bleak cold day in November, I saw my husband coming up the lane on a tractor. I slushed my way from the house to the barn to open the gate for him and to stand guard over sixty head of cattle, who stood nonchalantly chewing their cuds. Just leave the gate a minute with those sixty pair of eyes watching, and you have two hundred and forty feet moving in unison for the opening. With heads high and tails flying they are off and running.

I mused that this must be one of the reasons why farmers get married. Oh, moonlight and roses probably help, but in some hidden corner of their minds, they must see themselves sitting kinglike on a tractor seat while you struggle through sleet, snow, wind and rain to open the gates before them.

You have discovered other things about farming since that day when you first became a farmer's wife. Oh, the love is there, growing stronger with each passing year, nourished on the problems, woes and joys of farming. The moon is there, too, but most likely you won't notice it. If you do, it will be over a flashlight while you help your husband keep the little chickens moving and, therefore, alive because the electricity went off in a storm.

It didn't take long to learn the words "help mate" meant that you must become sort of an instant hired man. It is always the coldest day of the year when, without notice, your husband comes in and says, "I need the - - - tractor and can't get it started, guess we will have to pull it. Can you come drive the 65 tractor for me?" Help is needed, so, with a frozen smile, you climb upon the ice-cold tractor seat and pull the other tractor. That you are expected to have a meal on the table even though you went to town just an hour earlier for parts to a disc is "just understood." This, of course, is along with being introduced to slippery road driving and tire changing on the errand.

You recall an evening, just after you were married when your husband came in the house ill just at milking time. The doctor's words, "He will have to stay in bed for two days," were heard with mounting panic. What about the milking? It had to be done. Well, there just wasn't anyone else, and while you had never in your life milked a cow, you would try it. The purr of milk in the pail was very light, for the cows, wild beasts ten feet tall with large rolling eyes, never did understand what you were trying to do.

You soon found there are delights along with the woes in farming. For instance, the most breath-taking dawn ever witnessed was from a tractor seat at five o'clock in the morning. The sun came up over the tree tops splashing red rays all through the sky. The birds took off in their first morning flight. A crow was "cawing" somewhere in the distance. What a perfect pleasure, leaving you with a sense of peace and liberty.

You see many things riding the tractor and mowing hay that you'd never see in the kitchen. There are brilliantly colored pheasants hurrying away from the knives; a startled rabbit running before your wheels; lambs bleating as they frisk in the meadow across the road; and the ever-patient cows waiting at the barnyard gate ready to be milked.

As sixty pair of eyes follow my every movement, I lean against the gate and consider some of the advantages to my life on the farm.

There are many freedoms about living in the country. You can make all the noise you want, or shout at your husband, without complaints from your neighbors. You don't have to pull your shades, as there is only the sunlight, with dancing lightness, seeking your every movement. If your rose bed gets dug up, you know just whose dog did it.

There is a companionship that is hard to find anywhere else. Like the time your husband announced at the supper table, "I am going over to the eighty to see what the corn is like, want to go along?" you know that he is thinking about the gates that have to be opened as well as enjoying your company, and that you will listen to the fact that he needs a new wagon worse than you need a new washer. But then, there are always wild flowers to see, or sunsets to watch and you are glad to go.

You picture the wonderful experiences your family have shared; from the baby squirrels fed with an eye dropper; the blackbird with the broken wing to put splints on; the 4H Club calf the kids learned to ride; the frantic moment when the saddle turned on our riding horse and threw both riders to the ground; to the tiny lamb who began life in a box in the corner of the kitchen.

You think of all these things, and suddenly it is almost a privilege to be standing in the mud watching the gate while sixty pair of eyes eagerly wait their chance to get the advantage.

Abstract Parchments, I

by

Judith A. McKinley

The night is warm and fragrant,
for lovers to walk in, for couples
to talk in.
Use it as you must, for tomorrow
it may be gone.
Live the moment as it comes to you
and enjoy it for what it is.
Breathe it, smell it, love it,
but never, never touch it.
So fragile, the moment passes, and
we stand dazed,
For just at that hanging moment,
we blinked, and it was gone.
Too soon.

Theme of a Warrior

by

Michael Brandow

Banners fly above trod and beaten earth,
Cold steel clash one against the other,
Chimes of sword to shield rend each slight breeze,
Men twisted and fallen, as puppets cast aside,
Pale palms out, walks White Lady of Avenel,
I have battled, broken my lance,
I fear; only gods and fools do not.
Broken limbs, metal plates can mend, or be
Golden gauntlet inbrued in crimson,
Scar of mind that throbs from time to time,
I have killed and known no reason why,
Yet, bind my wounds; mend my armor,
For again, I go to battle.

